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On the Progress of Fire Insurance in Great Britain, as compared with other Countries. By SAMUEL BROWN, F.S.S.*

I.—*Introduction of Fire Assurance into England.*

THE system of fire insurance has been practised in Great Britain, either by private societies, public companies, or corporate bodies, for more than 180 years. In an article on fire insurance in Vol. XII., Part II., of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 8th edition, recently published, Mr. F. G. Smith draws attention to the various attempts which were made to interest the Corporation of the City of London in the subject, and to the proposals which for this purpose were submitted to the Court of Common Council between the years 1669 and 1680, and more especially to one from Mr. Deputy Newbold, which appears to have been the most acceptable. The delay which occurred before the report of the Committee was presented, enabled other private individuals to originate a scheme for fire insurance; and by the advertisements of the day it appears that they offered to insure against damage by fire, brick houses at 6d. in the pound, and timber houses at 1s. in the pound—rates which showed the little knowledge which at that time prevailed upon the subject, provided sufficient business could be reckoned upon to obtain an average of the risks. On the 13th October, 1681, the Court of Common Council decided to effect fire insurances on houses within the city and liberties, and engaged a sufficient fund and undoubted security by the Chamber of London, on lands and ground rents, to provide for the fulfilment of their contracts. The war that ensued between those private Societies which had been the first in the field, and the city insurers, gave rise to much amusing pamphleteering and advertisements in the *Gazette*. In 1681, 1682, and 1683, the journals of the Court of Common Council record the signing of many policies, and refer to the discussions and arguments of their opponents; but the city authorities appear to have been soon weary of the scheme, for, by a resolution of the 13th November, 1682, the Court decided to relinquish the business, to cancel the existing contracts, and to return the money accepted for them.†

* See note, page 254, Vol. VI.

† Previously to these rude essays of the Court of Common Council to set on foot a scheme of mutual insurance against loss from fire, it had been a long-established practice to make almost every considerable conflagration a case for an appeal, *ad misericordiam*, to the parishes in every part of the kingdom where such an appeal could produce a collection at the churches for the relief of the sufferers. The parochial archives of England contain abundant proof of this. The appeals for relief at length became so frequent that traces of serious complaint can be found. Contributions of this kind, which were purely voluntary and eleemosynary in England, were compulsory in some neighbouring countries; and it is

Although a few policies were issued after this date, the real extension of the business fell into the hands of some mutual Societies, which appear to have been established on the principle (not uncommon in the present day, for marine risks in small seaport towns, and for fire and hail insurance on the continent) of taking only a portion of the premiums to cover current expenses, and making calls for the losses as they arose. The plan is very defective where the risks fall irregularly, as heavy contributions are sometimes required, and are always met with great reluctance by the members; thus, one notice of call on the members of the Friendly Society in 1685 demands a contribution from each member of 5s. 1d. per cent. Mr. Deputy Newbold claimed compensation from the city for the failure of his favourite scheme; and on the report of the committee at the latter part of the year 1696, it was resolved to present him with the freedom of the city for two persons, to be approved of by the corporation, at the reduced fee of forty-six shillings and eight pence a piece. In the same year the oldest of the existing Fire Insurance Companies, the "Hand in Hand," was established, and for ten years remained without any important competitor. From 1696 to 1706 insurance against fire was principally confined to buildings in London, when the existing Sun Fire Office was projected by Mr. Charles Povey, to insure merchandise and household goods as well, and to extend the benefits of fire insurance beyond the limits of the metropolis. The Union followed in 1714, the Westminster Fire in 1717; and the Royal Exchange and London Assurance, having been previously existing and incorporated in June 1720, "for insuring ships and goods at sea or going to sea, and for lending money upon bottomry," were in 1721 authorized to extend their operations to the business of fire insurance.

Since then the number of Offices has gone on increasing, till, by the last published Government return of duty for 1855, it appears that in England and Wales there were no less than 65 Offices (39 in London and 26 in the country), 7 in Scotland, and 37 making returns of duty in Ireland (of which 2 only were native, and the

a fair query, whether the advanced and well advised laws of compensation for fire, embodied in the foreign codes, are not the development of the ancient *Coutumes* under that title? For example, there is the custom of *Furnes*—Article XI. of the Law (*Cora, or Keure, as it is termed*) which was promulgated, in the year 1240, by Thomas, Count of Flanders, and Johanna his countess, which recites the following community of liability:—"In quacunque villa combustio facta fuerit occulte, tota villa statim solvat damnum per illos quos eligent coratores; quod si malefactor sciri poterit, bannietur perpetuo, et solvetur damnum de bonis ejus; residuum vero cedat comiti. Qui vero de nachbrant acclamatus fuerit, per quinque coratores purgare se poterit; alioquin suspendetur, omnia bona sua erunt in gratia comitis, restituto prius damno illi qui damnum habuet: si prius tamen querimoniam fecit."—*F. Hendriks.*

rest branches of English or Scotch Companies) already included in the preceding numbers : making altogether 74 Offices in the United Kingdom.

Notwithstanding the importance of the subject, and the enormous amount of property which is known to be brought within the benefits of the system, no record exists of the actual amount insured, nor are there any public or private documents from which the real facts can be drawn. The nearest approximation to the truth is obtained from the returns of the Government duty, since it was first charged as a percentage on the sums insured, commencing with 24th June, 1782. Previous to that period the tax was only a stamp on each policy, without reference to the precise amount insured, which has varied at different times from 1694 to 1804, since which period it has remained at 1s. for each policy. As the returns for these stamp duties are undistinguished from those of other instruments subject to the same rate of charge, no information can be deduced relative to the number of policies issued in any one year ; and as insurances against fire effected by British Offices on property in foreign countries were exempted from the percentage duty from the 5th July, 1786, the most careful estimate we can make may still differ several millions from the actual amount of business transacted by the British Offices.

Even when we have recourse to the best means in our power, and endeavour to analyze the returns of duty paid into the Stamp Offices which have been called for by various members in different years, and printed by order of the House of Commons, we find the labour so great and the liability to error so increased, from the manner in which the statements have been presented, that scarcely any of the printed totals for any one year precisely agree. For England, the accounts of the sums paid into the Stamp Office for the fire insurance duties are printed separately for each Office, London and country, with the allowance at four per cent. for collection in London, and five per cent. for collection in the country, in each of the four quarters, all the items being given in shillings and pence. No attempt is made to bring together the total duty paid by each Office in the year, nor by the London or country Offices collectively; and, without the great labour of copying the whole of the returns into a new form, it is very difficult to obtain accuracy in the totals. If any error has occurred in the printing, it is equally impossible to ascertain in which column the error lies. The same remark applies to the returns for Ireland, both for the insurance duties and the farming stock exempt ; and, with the

exception of the small portion of the return from Scotland, the whole document is by no means creditable to the Department from which it is issued.

These returns differ also in other respects from other official documents, recording the amounts of the duty paid. A Report on Fire Insurance Duties, by Mr. George Coode, addressed to the Right Honourable Sir George Cornwall Lewis, Bart., M.P., Chancellor of the Exchequer, dated 29th November, 1856, and presented by command of Her Majesty to both Houses of Parliament, contains a very valuable table of the various fiscal changes which have been made in the duties, and other historical and statistical facts relating to the subject, which are well worthy of attention. From 1782 to 1800 the returns of the percentage duty are given to the 1st August in each year, and from 1800 to 1856 to the 5th January in each year; so that the statements of agricultural stock exempt, made up to Christmas of one year, have to be compared with the sums insured, deduced from the duties to the 5th January of next year. Mr. Coode has evidently taken great pains in the preparation of this table, and has added the total value of property insured for every year from 1783 to 1855; but, as his calculations comprise only the insurance business of England and Wales, and differ in date from the other Government quarterly returns, I have thought it better to give a statement of the total business in Great Britain from the best sources I could refer to, and merely present from Mr. Coode's table the total amount insured in each year, and the summary of the changes made in the duties, and the progress of fire insurance, as indicated by the totals at each period of change. Before doing so, however, I must draw attention to what appears to be an error of Mr. Coode in quoting the date of one of the Acts of Parliament, by which the proportionate value of the sums insured will have to be corrected from 1788 to 1797 inclusive, by adding one third to the amount given. The additional duty of 6d., added to the first percentage duty of 1s. 6d. from the 24th June, 1782, is stated by Sir Frederick Eden, in his little work *On the Policy and Expediency of granting Insurance Charters*, to have been laid on by 37 Geo. III., c. 90, instead of 27 Geo. III., and this I find to be the case on referring to the Act. The alteration consequently dates from 5th July, 1797, instead of 1787, as given by Mr. Coode.

The following are the changes recorded in the table alluded to, with the estimated value of property ascertained from the percentage duty at the respective periods:—

		I. Stamp on Policy.	II. Percentage Duty.	Revenue from Duty.	Value of Property Insured.
1694	5 Wm. & Mary, c. 21, continued by several Acts, and made per- petual by 1 Geo. I., stat. 2, c. 12, sec. 8; repealed by 44 Geo. III., c. 98, sec. 1.	6d. on the Policy for 4 years, from 28th June, 1694.		£.	£.
1698	9 Wm. III., c. 25, made perpetual, I Geo. I., stat. 2, c. 12. Wholly repealed by 44 Geo. III., c. 98, sec. 1. 48 Geo. III., c. 149.	6d. additional, from 1st Aug., 1698, = 1s.			
1711	10 Anne, c. 26.	2s. 4d. additional for 32 years, from 1st Aug., 1712 (1744), = 3s. 4d.			
1713	12 Anne, stat. 2, c. 9, expressly applied to Poli- cies by Declara- tion in 5 Geo. III., c. 35.	6d. additional for 32 years, from 2nd Aug., 1714 (1746), = 3s. 10d.			
1756	30 Geo. II., c. 19, declared to ap- ply to Policies by 5 Geo. III., c. 35.	1s. additional, from 5th July, 1757, = 4s. 10d.			
1765	5 Geo. III., c. 35	2d. additional, from June, 1765, within the Weekly Bills, = 5s.; 2s. 6d. addi- tional elsewhere, = 5s.			
1775	16 Geo. III., c. 34	1s. additional after 5th July, 1776, = 6s.			
1776	17 Geo. III., c. 50	1s. on Policies of Insurance exceed- ing £1,000; 5s. additional, from 5th July, 1777, on £1,000 and over, = 11s.			
1781	22 Geo. III., c. 48	..	1s. 6d. per £100 assured from 24th June, 1782.		
1782-3	.. ..	.. ..	.. ..	Years ending 1st August,	
1786	26 Geo. III., c. 82	.. ..	Foreign Property exempted, from 5th July, 1786.	142,822 99,587	173,333,330* 132,772,667
1796	.. ..	.. ..	.. ..	141,256	188,340,000

* Duty for 401 days; the sums insured computed on £130,000, the proportion for one year.

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		I. Stamp on Policy.	II. Percentage Duty.	Revenue from Duty.	Value of Property Insured.
1797	37 Geo. III., c. 90	Repeal of former Duties of 6s., and 11s. New Duties, from 5th July, 1797—3s. under £1,000, and 6s. for £1,000 and upwards.	6d. additional, from 5th July, 1797, = 2s.	£ 136,122	£ 181,496,000
1798	.. ..	.. ..	.. ..	183,756 To 5th Jan. 238,067	183,756,000 238,067,000
1804	44 Geo. III., c. 98	Repeal of former Duties. New Duty, from 10th October, 1804, 1s. on the Policy.	Repeal of former Duties. New Duty, from 10th October, 1804, 2s. 6d. on £100 insured.	.. ..	.. ..
1805	.. ..	.. ..	.. ..	260,610	248,200,000*
1808	48 Geo. III., c. 149.	Repeal of former Duties. New Duty, from 10th October, 1808, 1s. on the Policy.	.. ..	.. ..	.. ..
1810	50 Geo. III., c. 35	Colonial Insurances, from 24th May, 1810—Stamp (instead of former Duty), 2s. 6d. per £100, and 1s. on the Policy.	Colonial Insurances: former Duty repealed, from 24th May, 1810.	.. ..	.. ..
1815	55 Geo. III., c. 184.	Repeal of former Duty. New Duty, from 31st August, 1815, 1s. on the Policy; Colonial Insurance, 2s. 6d. on Policy, 5s. per £100.	Repeal of former Duty. New Duty, from 28th Sept., 1815, 3s. per £100 insured.	486,540	389,232,000
1816	.. ..	.. ..	.. ..	.. ..	.. ..
1828	9 Geo. IV., c. 3	.. ..	Detached Buildings, and their contents, to be insured separately from 5 July, 1828. Average Insurance permitted.	501,955	384,785,578†
1833	3 & 4 Wm. IV., c. 23.	Agricultural Insurances exempted from 24th June, 1833.	Agricultural Insurances exempted from 24th June, 1833.	.. ..	.. ..
1834	.. ..	.. ..	.. ..	754,695	503,130,000
1835	.. ..	.. ..	.. ..	725,509	483,939,333‡
					Agric.
1842	5 & 6 Vict., c. 79	.. ..	.. ..	.. ..	37,211,603‡
1855	.. ..	.. ..	.. ..	1,203,861	802,574,000§
					62,285,976§
1856	19 Vict., c. 22	Duties chargeable on Insurances made abroad. Reinsurances charged with Policy Stamp Duty.	Duties charged on Insurances made abroad. Reinsurances exempted.	.. ..	.. ..

* Duty assumed, 288 days at 2s., and 77 days at 2s. 6d. † Duty assumed at 2s. 6d. for 266 days, at 3s. for 99 days.
 ‡ Total value of property insured, 1835, £521,150,936. § Ditto, 1855, £864,859,976.

From the statements given it would appear that the sums insured diminished gradually from 173½ million pounds, for the year ending 1st August, 1783, to about 132½ million pounds in 1786, when foreign property was exempted from the duty; the diminution in the three years being at the rate of about £13,520,000 each year. During this period the stamp duties were very heavy, being, as will be seen in the above statement, 6s. on policies under £1,000, and 11s. on policies for £1,000 and upwards, in addition to the duty of 1s. 6d. per cent. on the sum insured. Considerable opposition was made in the city to these high rates, and in 1797 those duties on policies were respectively reduced to 3s. and 6s. The amount insured increased from 1788, till it reached nearly 188½ million pounds in the year ending 1st August, 1796, being an increase at the rate of about £5,556,000 per annum. In the following year, when the percentage duty was increased by one third, it fell to 181½ million pounds, from which it again increased till it reached 238 million pounds for the year ending 5th January, 1804, being at the rate of £8,081,000 per annum. In that year the percentage duty was raised to 2s. 6d., but the policy duty reduced to 1s., a very considerable reduction; and from 1804 to 1815 the sums insured increased from 238 million pounds to about 389½ million pounds, being an increase of £137,742,000 per annum. The duty being again increased in September, 1815, and made 3s. per cent., appears to have caused an absolute diminution of insurances, varying from 4½ to 7 million pounds, in the next and two following years. From that period till 1834 no further change was made in the duties till the exemption of agricultural stock from duty from 24th June, 1833: and from January, 1835, to January, 1855, the sums insured increased from about 484 million pounds to 802½ million pounds, and the agricultural stock exempt from 37½ million pounds to 62½ million pounds, or together about £17,185,000 per annum.

It will be seen that some parts of the statements above given differ materially from the estimates of Mr. Coode, in consequence of the discrepancy in the dates of the Act of Parliament alluded to; and his defence of the duty now imposed, and his answers to the objections which have been urged against it, deserve careful consideration. In order, however, to complete the full view of the progress of fire insurance in Great Britain, and bring into comparison the few statistics which we have of its progress in other countries, I defer a few remarks on his report to a subsequent part of this paper.

II.—*Fire Insurance in Great Britain.*

In the subjoined table I have endeavoured to bring together as accurate information as I could obtain of the total amount of property insured against fire in the London and country Offices respectively, deduced from the quarterly returns of the fire insurance duties. The statements as to the London Offices from 1782 to 1855 were taken from the totals put together from the quarterly statements in the original returns, which have been kept from year to year by some of the principal London Offices, and appear to have been done with much care and accuracy. The statements as to the duties paid by country Offices, and in Scotland and Ireland, are from a table given in the *Assurance Magazine*, Vol. II., p. 75; and the amount of agricultural stock exempt, which shows the amount insured in the London, country, Scotch, and Irish Offices, or branch Offices carrying on their operations in Scotland and Ireland, from Mr. Coode's table and other sources. The last column shows the total amount of property, insured against fire in the United Kingdom, which is either liable to the duty or declared to be exempt, as it has been given by Mr. Coode, for England and Wales. As, however, the dates of the duty returns change in 1801, I have placed each of the totals terminating with the 5th January to compare with the year ending Christmas preceding, leaving out the estimate for part of the year 1800, which would otherwise occur twice. It is to be regretted that no accurate computation can be given of the amount of insurances effected on foreign property. Only a few of the Offices carry on this class of business. Mr. F. G. Smith is disposed to estimate the total home and foreign business for last year at not less than £1,500,000,000; but I have been favoured with the opinion of a gentleman, whose position and experience give the greatest weight to his judgment, that the whole of the foreign fire insurance of Great Britain, including that of the colonies, does not exceed £25,000,000. Between statements differing so widely, it is impossible to give any accurate computation; but the greater part of those whom I consulted considered that from £100,000,000 to £200,000,000 were more probably the limits, and I have therefore assumed £125,000,000, being only one fourth of the highest estimate.

Table showing the Sums Insured against Fire in the London Offices from 1782 to 1855; in the Country Offices, from 1805 to 1855; and in Scotland and Ireland, from 1836 to 1855: together with Mr. Coode's Table of the Totals for England and Wales from 1782 to 1855 (deduced from the Returns of the Percentage Duty).

[The figures on the right of the decimal point express £100,000s.]

Year.	London Offices.	Country Offices.	Total England and Wales.	Scotland.	Ireland.	Total Great Britain.	Total England and Wales: by Mr. Coode's Table, corrected.	Total Great Britain, including Agricultural Stock exempt.
	£ Milns.	£ Milns.	£ Milns.	£ Milns.	£ Milns.	£ Milns.	£ Milns.	£ Milns.
1782 Duty 1s. 6d. from 24th June	77·2	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1783	147·4	..	..	..	..	..	173·3	..
1784	119·4	..	..	..	..	..	154·9	..
1785	127·2	..	..	..	..	..	136·6	..
1786	124·2	..	..	..	..	..	132·8	..
1787	128·1	..	..	..	..	..	136·9	..
1788	132·3	..	..	..	..	..	135·1	..
1789	135·3	..	..	..	..	..	139·9	..
1790	142·1	..	..	..	..	..	144·9	..
1791	148·1	..	..	..	..	..	150·9	..
1792	163·6	..	..	..	..	..	162·1	..
1793	163·0	..	..	..	..	..	177·3	..
1794	169·4	..	..	..	..	..	176·5	..
1795	178·8	..	..	..	..	..	176·7	..
1796	174·0	..	..	..	..	..	188·3	..
1797 Duty 2s. from 5th July	175·0	..	..	..	..	..	181·5	..
1798	188·9	..	..	..	..	..	183·8	..
1799	182·9	..	..	..	..	..	198·6	..
1800	195·7	..	..	..	..	..	204·9	..
1801	205·5	..	..	..	..	..	219·6	..
1802	210·8	..	..	..	..	..	223·5	..
1803	217·5	..	..	..	..	..	238·1	..
1804 Duty 2s. 6d. from 10 Oct.	224·1	..	..	..	..	..	248·2	..
1805	233·8	21·2	255·0	..	..	..	256·9	..
1806	246·6	24·1	270·7	..	..	..	272·9	..
1807	255·1	22·3	277·4	..	..	..	281·6	..
1808	271·2	35·7	306·9	..	..	..	303·1	..

In 1797, half the duty taken at 1s., and half at 2s.

In 1804, three quarters of the duty taken at 2s., and one quarter at 2s. 6d.

Table showing the Sums Insured against Fire—(continued).

Year.	London Offices.	Country Offices.	Total England and Wales.	Scotland.	Ireland.	Total Great Britain.	Total England and Wales: by Mr. Coode's Table, corrected.	Total Great Britain, including Agricultural Stock exempt.
1809	£ Milns. 289·4	£ Milns. 38·2	£ Milns. 327·6	£ Milns. ..	£ Milns. ..	£ Milns. ..	£ Milns. 324·8	£ Milns. ..
1810	304·9	46·0	350·9	..	..	..	347·3	..
1811	307·9	52·1	360·0	..	..	..	358·2	..
1812	311·3	57·2	368·5	..	..	..	362·6	..
1813	320·7	60·7	381·4	..	..	..	330·0	..
1814	323·9	63·7	387·6	..	..	..	389·2	..
1815 Duty 3s. from 28th Sept.)	328·9	62·5	391·4	..	..	..	384·8	..
1816	313·3	74·1	387·4	..	..	..	382·1	..
1817	306·6	80·5	387·1	..	..	..	385·0	..
1818	311·3	75·5	386·8	..	..	..	389·5	..
1819	313·5	72·2	385·7	..	..	..	396·8	..
1820	315·3	77·9	393·2	..	..	..	391·3	..
1821	311·9	..	..	..	..	..	399·0	..
1822	314·5	90·4	404·9	..	..	..	405·3	..
1823	318·7	94·1	412·8	..	..	..	401·7	..
1824	330·8	103·6	434·4	..	..	..	427·7	..
1825	329·2	118·7	447·9	..	..	..	442·2	..
1826	337·7	120·7	458·4	..	..	..	461·2	..
1827	328·6	123·1	451·7	..	..	..	446·7	..
1828	348·9	123·2	472·1	..	..	..	470·8	..
1829	352·9	124·5	477·4	..	..	..	482·2	..
1830	356·3	129·6	485·9	..	..	..	478·2	..
1831	366·9	134·5	501·4	..	..	..	499·1	..
1832	370·0	132·1	502·1	..	..	..	503·7	..
1833	366·6	126·5	493·1	..	..	..	503·1	..
1834 Agricultural stock exempt	366·9	124·7	491·6	..	..	..	521·2	..
1835	22·6	18·9	41·5	..	..	..	545·6	..
1836	387·2	140·0	527·2	37·0	5·5	569·7	563·4	615·6
1837	23·7	19·4	43·1	2·8	..	45·9	..	..
1838	392·6	144·9	537·5	38·6	26·8	602·9	582·2	651·5
	25·1	19·8	44·9	3·4	0·3	48·6	..	..
	410·1	150·7	560·8	39·8	28·0	628·6	571·2	680·5
	27·3	20·6	47·9	3·6	0·4	51·9	..	..

In 1815, three quarters taken at 2s. 6d. duty, and one quarter at 3s.

In 1834 and subsequent years, farming stock exempt placed under the line in each year.

Table showing the Sums Insured against Fire—(continued).

Year.	London Offices.	Country Offices.	Total England and Wales.	Scotland.	Ireland.	Total Great Britain.	Total England and Wales: by Mr. Coode's Table, corrected.	Total Great Britain, including Agricultural Stock exempt.
1839	£ Milns. 425·7 27·2	£ Milns. 153·9 21·5	£ Milns. 579·6 48·7	£ Milns. 39·5 2·9	£ Milns. 29·3 0·4	£ Milns. 648·4 52·0	£ Milns. 625·1	£ Milns. 700·4
1840	438·2 28·6	157·1 22·4	595·3 51·0	40·2 3·3	30·1 0·4	665·6 54·7	641·4	720·3
1841	446·7 30·0	159·2 22·0	605·9 52·0	44·7 4·0	31·0 0·4	681·6 56·4	652·7	738·0
1842	451·8 31·2	159·8 21·9	611·6 53·1	44·2 4·1	30·5 0·5	686·3 57·7	666·8	744·0
1843	461·3 33·6	156·9 22·0	618·2 55·6	44·6 4·1	32·6 0·5	695·4 60·2	670·2	755·6
1844	465·3 32·4	159·3 22·5	624·6 54·9	46·0 4·3	33·5 0·5	704·1 59·7	681·9	763·8
1845	481·5 33·5	167·3 22·4	648·8 55·9	47·8 4·5	33·2 0·6	729·8 61·0	696·5	790·8
1846	484·3 33·8	172·9 22·7	657·2 56·0	50·1 5·0	35·5 0·5	742·8 61·5	676·6	804·3
1847	492·0 35·1	176·9 23·1	668·9 58·2	47·0 4·7	35·7 0·6	751·6 63·5	727·0	815·1
1848	493·9 35·9	177·2 23·0	671·1 58·9	42·5 4·1	34·0 0·6	747·6 63·6	726·5	811·2
1849	503·4 36·5	180·1 21·8	683·5 58·3	43·3 4·1	33·6 0·5	760·4 62·9	738·1	823·3
1850	521·4 36·6	181·0 20·6	702·4 57·2	44·3 4·2	34·4 0·5	781·1 61·9	752·1	843·0
1851	533·8 34·5	185·7 20·4	719·5 54·9	44·6 4·1	35·3 0·4	799·4 59·4	768·8	858·8
1852	542·6 33·9	195·5 20·9	738·1 54·8	45·8 4·3	35·9 0·5	819·8 59·6	787·1	879·4
1853	554·7 34·5	210·1 21·5	764·8 56·0	48·4 4·4	38·1 0·6	851·3 61·0	816·9	912·3
1854	567·5 36·0	224·2 22·9	791·7 58·9	51·5 5·3	39·0 0·6	882·2 64·8	844·3	947·0
1855	573·6 38·0	230·9 24·3	804·5 62·3	53·0 5·2	39·5 0·6	897·0 68·1	864·9	965·1

In Mr. Coode's table, 1834 and subsequent years include agricultural stock exempt.

III.—Fire Insurance in France.

The amount of fire insurance in Great Britain, though it may appear large to those to whom the subject is presented for the first time, sinks into comparative insignificance when contrasted with the totals insured in France, especially when we consider that in the former country the system has been known for more than 180 years, and that in the latter it was only introduced about 40 years ago. The first Company regularly established in France, "La Mutuelle

de Paris pour les Immeubles," only dates from 1816; and the first proprietary Company, "La Compagnie d'Assurances Générales," from 1819. The plan and constitution of the latter was professedly founded on the model of the English Companies. The total amount insured in the "Sun," the largest English Company, exceeded, according to the duty returns, £140,442,000 in 1855, exclusive of foreign insurances; but in the same year, after 35 years' existence, the insurances in the "Nationale," established only in 1820, amounted to upwards of £203,000,000, after deducting reassurances. In 1836 there were but five proprietary Companies existing in France, at which time the insurances therein amounted to £440,930,040. In 1837 and 1838 five new Companies were founded; and their new business, combined with the increasing business of the old, showed in 1839 a total of £539,625,094, being an increase, in three years, of 22·4 per cent. Between 1839 and 1844, six new Companies were added to the list; and, at the latter date, the sums insured in fourteen out of the sixteen Companies amounted to £785,480,819, being an increase in five years, on the previous amount, of 45·6 per cent.

The following table will give a brief summary of the operations of the proprietary Companies in France for the ten years 1843 to 1852 inclusive:—

Sums Insured against Fire in French Proprietary Companies in each of the Years 1843 to 1852.

Year.	Number of Com- pa- nies.	Sums Insured.	Premiums received in the Year.	Loss in the Year.	Premiums per Cent. on Sums Insured.	Loss.	
						Per Cent. on Sum Assured.	Per Cent. on Premium.
1843	11	695,260,639	649,626	291,439	.093	.042	44·8
1844	14	785,480,820	723,168	410,697	.092	.052	56·8
1845	19	861,469,862	692,677	455,963	.080	.053	65·8
		(12 Comps.)					
1846	12	816,248,039	726,648	466,476	.089	.057	64·2
1847	14	889,628,056	810,868	442,203	.091	.050	54·5
1848	14	928,795,949	841,238	413,137	.091	.044	49·1
1849	9	921,292,646	797,789	383,860	.087	.042	48·1
1850	13	968,873,833	827,497	415,270	.085	.043	50·2
1851	all	1,018,940,556	893,890	382,413	.088	.038	42·8
1852	all	1,026,705,087	902,478	397,696	.088	.039	44·1

As in the above table the accounts of some of the Companies are wanting, the total amounts insured should be examined in reference to the number of Companies in the margin: otherwise it might appear, incorrectly, that the total amount of insurance has

diminished in some of the years. The premiums are remarkably low, scarcely exceeding an average of .087 or 1s. 9d. per cent., including heavy mercantile and manufacturing risks, and yet the losses form about the same percentage on the premiums as is generally understood to be the average in this country. Taking the numbers and amounts of losses which were given in some of the original returns, the average in the Royale or Nationale was found to be about £44; in the Générale and Urbaine, £39.1; and in La France, £38.2 each loss.

In 1849, the total expenses were about 35.3 per cent. on the premiums; in 1850, about 37.021 per cent. on ditto; in 1851, 37.025 per cent.; in 1852, about 39 per cent.

I have recently been favoured by M. Maas, the Manager of one of the leading French Companies, "L'Union," with some additional facts for subsequent years—

		Sums Insured against Fire in Proprietary Companies in France. £.
In 1853	.	1,092,000,000
„ 1854	:	1,176,000,000
„ 1855	:	1,236,000,000

The accounts for 1856 are not yet published, but it is estimated that the sums insured will very nearly reach the large amount of £1,320,000,000 in the proprietary Companies alone. The accounts of the mutual Companies are not published with the same regularity and fullness; but M. Maas computes them at not less than £480,000,000, making the large total for last year of £1,800,000,000, not far short of double the amount of insurances in the United Kingdom. The above amount is stated less the reinsurances effected with other countries; but as, on the other hand, the reinsurances from abroad are included, the difference to be added would probably not amount to more than £80,000,000.

In 1850, the total amount assured by mutual and proprietary Companies was estimated at about £1,318,433,804, the annual premiums on which were £1,120,669=.085 per cent. on sums insured, and losses, £565,468=.043 per cent. on sums insured. In 1852, the total insurances in mutual and proprietary Companies were estimated at £1,415,000,000.

In order to account, however, in some degree, for the very large amount insured compared with Great Britain, it is necessary to explain some peculiarities in the law of French insurance, which give rise to what are called "le risque locatif" and "le recours des voisins."

As to the former, it is provided by Article 1733 of the Code Civil :—“The tenant must answer for a fire unless he can prove that it happened by accident or by fault of construction, or that the fire communicated from an adjoining house.”

Article 1734.—“If there are several tenants, all are fully responsible for the fire, unless they can prove that the fire commenced in the dwelling-part of any one of them, in which case he alone shall be held liable; or unless some can prove that it was not possible that the fire could commence in their portion of the dwelling, in which case they shall be exempt.”

One mutual Company, quoting these laws, offers to guarantee tenants from the responsibility thus attached to them at one third of the usual rate if the building is insured by the Society, or at one half if not.

As to the latter, Article 1382 of the Code Civil enacted :—“The consequences of any act, which causes damage to another, must be repaired by him through whose fault it has been caused.”

Article 1383.—“Everyone is responsible for the damage he has caused, not only by his own act, but by his imprudence or negligence.”

The proprietor or the tenant from whose dwelling the fire is communicated is liable to indemnify his neighbours who may have suffered loss by the extension of the fire; and the same Company offers to guarantee the effects of this indemnification for a quarter of the rates demanded for the house assured or the neighbouring dwelling.

To what extent these regulations affect the total amount of insurances in France, it is difficult to say; but there can be no doubt they have a very considerable influence thereon, and probably explain also, in a great degree, the extreme lowness of the premiums.

Mr. Bunyon, in an article “on the liability of the occupier of a tenement for damage done to that of a neighbour by fire kindled through his own or his servant’s negligence” (*Assurance Magazine*, vol. i., p. 47), refers to various legal decisions on the same subject, and contends that the same principles of law apply in England; but considers that the risk is not provided against in this country, in consequence of the obstacle presented by the existing duty, which would fall as heavily upon an insurance of this limited character as upon those of an ordinary description.

(*To be continued.*)